



## Barbara Sue Bostian

September 11, 1937 - June 30, 2020

Barbara S. Bostian left her body on Tuesday, June 30, 2020, at the age of 82. Throughout her earthly life, Barbara sought deep connection, both with other beings and with something greater. Her longing for spiritual truth and her desire for meaningful relationships were her two most fundamental, and intertwined, guiding principles.

She was born Barbara Sue Johnson, in Danville, Virginia, toward the end of the Great Depression, on September 11, 1937, to parents Harry and Thelma (née Swann). Barbara was raised Baptist and attended an affiliated women's college and then a seminary, both in Raleigh, where she met her first husband, K. Eugene Bostian.

After ten years of marriage, much of it spent in Wisconsin, they divorced, and Barbara began raising their three children, Lori, Jeff, and Kyle, as a single mother. She also began exploring alternatives to her Baptist background, attending Unitarian churches and experimenting with Transcendental Meditation.

In her early forties Barbara married again, to William C. Pyle, and the family moved from a Minneapolis suburb to Amherst, Massachusetts. She'd gone from the conservative South to the moderate Midwest to the progressive Northeast.

In her new environment Barbara found a religion, the Bahá'í Faith, that rang true for her. Serving the goals of the Faith -- which include world peace, equality among all people, and the eradication of racism, poverty, and hunger -- and participating in its communities of believers became cornerstones of her life for her remaining forty-plus years.

After five years she separated from, and later divorced, her second husband. With her two older children, Lori and Jeff, no longer living at home with her, she returned to North Carolina (Chapel Hill) and earned a master's degree in public health. Her subsequent two years working as a public health educator with Native American tribes in the region around Reno, Nevada, were among the most rewarding of her professional experiences, which also encompassed personnel manager in a bank and editor for a non-profit research institute. The latter job brought her to

Florida, where she resided for most of her final three decades, in St. Petersburg, St. Pete Beach, Gainesville, and Bradenton.

Barbara's commitment to her Faith and her interest in other cultures led her to travel to various parts of the world. She toured Egypt and Greece with her three children. She twice

went on Pilgrimage to Bahá'í holy sites in Israel, once accompanied by her youngest son, Kyle, with whom she also visited Jerusalem and the Palestinian territory there.

In her late fifties, Barbara fulfilled a lifelong dream and demonstrated her adventurous spirit by going solo to China. Her two-month trip sparked such joy she returned a year later and spent two years teaching English to university students in Henan Province. Her experiences in China transformed her through profound satisfaction. She came home with what she called a second family of former students and friends, many of whom continued to correspond with her to her final days. Barbara went back to China a third time, then in her late sixties, for six months. In retirement, she taught English to Chinese students at the University of Florida through a free program she started.

Singing was another cherished activity of Barbara's. She participated in several choirs over the years, most recently the Bay Chorale of Bradenton. She also loved walking, especially with long-term friends Ann Haendel of St. Pete Beach and Joanne Auth of Gainesville.

Barbara faced some serious health challenges in her last dozen or so years. She nearly died from complications following surgery to replace her aortic root and valve in 2006. But she still had work to do here and pulled through. She underwent a double mastectomy in 2013 and just received her official permanent cancer-free report in 2019. By then she was experiencing a fairly rapid decline in wellbeing, including advanced dementia requiring professional assistance. She spent her last few months in the devoted care of the staff at Arden Courts of Seminole. She passed with son Kyle at her bedside and the Bahá'í holy phrase "Alláh-u-Abhá" in her consciousness.

She's survived by her three children, Lori Weaver (Tom) of Shutesbury, Massachusetts, Jeff Bostian (Tana Aurland) of Easthampton, Massachusetts, and Kyle Bostian (Tiffany Wilhelm) of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, as well as two grandchildren, Jennifer Weaver and Allan Weaver (Chinda), and three great-grandchildren, Alivia Robinson, Brooklyn Court, and Jazmyn Weaver. She was affectionately known to the youngest generation as Gramma Gigi. The second of her former husbands, Bill Pyle of St. Pete Beach, remained a close friend and loving supporter right to the end. She will be dearly missed by all of them and by many others across the country and around the globe, especially members of her beloved Bahá'í communities.

Barbara will be interred in accordance with Bahá'í customs at Heartwood Preserve, a green cemetery, in Trinity, Florida, on Friday, July 3. Members of the Bahá'í Faith are encouraged to contribute to the Fund in her memory. Others wishing to make a donation on her behalf, might do so to any organization that promotes justice. Although a genuine lover of all humanity, she was an advocate in particular for women, Native Americans, and the environment.

# Cemetery

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## Heartwood Preserve Conservation Cemetery

4100 Starkey Blvd

New Port Richey, FL, 34655

# Events

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**JUL 3** **Graveside Memorial Service** 11:00AM - 12:00PM

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Heartwood Preserve Conservation Cemetery

4100 Starkey Blvd, New Port Richey, FL, US, 34655

# Comments

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“ On behalf of students that Mrs. Barbara taught at Henan Normal University (English Language & Art, Class of 1998), I want to express my deepest sympathy as we remember her wonderful life. She was truly a wonderful educator who inspired, nurtured and challenged young minds. She brought to us exploratory spirits and encouraged every one of us to reach to our fullest potential. Her class was ALWAYS filled with her sunshine smile, her wonderful songs, and her broad knowledge of religion, literature, culture and art. The office hours she held at her cozy apartment sparkled dreams and ambitions of many eager college students. And yes, her office hours always started at 1PM (traditional nap time in China), which means you need to have dedication and devotion too, to go to her session. It is amazing how her dedication and devotion had impacted our learning experience in college and we remembered her so fondly. May she rest in peace in heaven.

**Zosma Shen** - July 08, 2020 at 12:18 PM

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“ My profound sympathy to Barbara's family. Barbara was my "dinner and a movie" partner while I lived In St. Petersburg and we shared some many fun times. We remained long distance friends for a number of years and I will miss her so. Rest in Peace.

Kathy Billings



**Billings** - July 07, 2020 at 12:40 PM

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“ Barbara was my teacher of English during her stay in Henan Province, China. She was very kind and pretty. Though I was not her favorite student, and for long I have been regretting that I hadn't made any effort in establishing a much closer connection with her in these university days, there was still a lot of beautiful memory: her lectures about religion in the large meeting room, pleasant chat in her cozy apartment...

For years and still now I am greatly impressed by her devotion to her belief and her love for people. I cherish such personality and it is also the source of my strength and happiness.

**Yang** - July 07, 2020 at 10:54 AM

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“ Deep in my memory of university life,there lived,lives and will live this lady Barbara for ever. She was nice and kind,always giving warmth and encouragement to her students who were too shy to speak English,whether it was in the classroom or in her cozy apartment where on a regular basis there was open time each week for students to practise their spoken English. She was the American woman who changed the image of American people like those in Hollywood movies in my heart. She was so real,like the grandma next door and she made the globe a much smaller one.She will live in my heart for ever. We morn for you, our dear and beloved teacher,Barbara.

From Benjamin,your student in China

**Benjamin Zhang** - July 08, 2020 at 01:01 AM

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“ Barbara and I have been friends since the Amherst, MA days. We always called each other sisters and had many great visits together when she moved to Florida, usually at her various lovely homes near the beach. Our discussions were far ranging and always meaningful. One of the things she always said was, "I feel like I need to do more!" I am reading to her the accompanying bio, which should dispel any feeling that she did not do her part! Blessed be to one of the most sincere people I've ever known.

**Judy Garis** - July 03, 2020 at 08:01 PM

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“ I was thinking of Barbara yesterday while sending out an email from our Bahá'í community, wondering if she would need to have it or not? What a lovely person who introduced us to lovely Chinese students at our center. She was dedicated and bright and is now a superstar! We took a trip once together and stayed with a family in one of the kid's rooms. Like sisters. Easy to get along with - Barbara!

**Jeanne De Diaz** - July 03, 2020 at 02:29 PM

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“ Lisa Haskins lit a candle in memory of Barbara Sue Bostian



Lisa Haskins - July 03, 2020 at 01:13 PM

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“ 3 files added to the album Gainesville photos



Joanne B. Auth - July 03, 2020 at 12:40 PM

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“ Lori Weaver lit a candle in memory of Barbara Sue Bostian



Lori Weaver - July 03, 2020 at 10:12 AM